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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment THOU SHALT CONDEMN.

It is sometimes said, that the Clergy should abstain from politics; and that, if a Minister of CHRIST is political, he is not a follower of Him who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Now there is a sense in which this is true, but, as it is commonly taken, it is very false.

It is true that the mere affairs of this world should not engage a Clergyman; but it is absurd to say that the affairs of this world should not at all engage his attention. If so, this world is not a preparation for another. Are we to speak when individuals sin, and not when a nation, which is but a collection of individuals? Must we speak to the poor, but not to the rich and powerful? In vain does St. James warn us against having the faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST with respect of persons. In vain does the Prophet declare to us the Word of the LORD, that if the watchmen of Israel "speak not to warn the wicked from his way," "his blood will be required at the watchman's hand."

Complete our LORD'S declaration concerning the nature of His kingdom, and you will see it is not at all inconsistent with the duty of our active and zealous interference in matters of this world. "If My kingdom were of this world," He says, "*then would My servants fight.*"—Here He has vouchsafed so to explain Himself, that there is no room for misunderstanding His meaning. No one contends that His Ministers ought to use the weapons of a carnal warfare;—but surely to protest, to warn, to threaten, to excommunicate, are not such weapons. Let us not be scared from a plain duty, by the mere force of a misapplied text. There is an unexceptionable sense in which a Clergyman may, nay must be *political*. And above all, when the Nation interferes with the rights and possessions of the Church, it can with even less grace complain of the Church interfering with the Nation.

With this introduction let me call your attention to what seems

a most dangerous infringement on our rights, on the part of the State. The Legislature has lately taken upon itself to remodel the dioceses of Ireland; a proceeding which involves the appointment of certain Bishops over certain Clergy, and of certain Clergy under certain Bishops, without the Church being consulted in the matter. I do not say whether or not harm will follow from this particular act with reference to Ireland; but consider whether it be not in itself an interference with things spiritual.

Are we content to be accounted the mere creation of the State, as schoolmasters and teachers may be, or soldiers, or magistrates, or other public officers? Did the State make us? can it unmake us? can it send out missionaries? can it arrange dioceses? Surely all these are spiritual functions; and Laymen may as well set about preaching, and consecrating the Bread and Wine, as assume these. I do not say the guilt is equal; but that, if the latter is guilt, the former is. Would St. Paul, with his good will, have suffered the Roman power to appoint Timothy, Bishop of Miletus, as well as Ephesus? Would Timothy at such a bidding have undertaken the charge? Is not the notion of such an order, such an obedience, absurd? Yet has it not been realized in what has lately happened? For in what is the English State at present different from the Roman formerly? Neither can be accounted members of the Church of CHRIST. No one can say the British Legislature is in our communion, or that its members are necessarily even Christians. What pretence then has it for, not merely advising, but superseding the Ecclesiastical Power?

Bear with me, while I express my fear that we do not, as much as we ought, consider the force of that article of our Belief, "The One Catholic and Apostolic Church." This is a tenet so important as to have been in the Creed from the beginning. It is mentioned there as a *fact*, and a fact *to be believed*, and therefore practical Now what do we conceive is meant by it? As people vaguely take it in the present day, it seems only an assertion that there is a number of sincere Christians scattered through the world. But is not this a truism? who doubt it? who can deny that there are people in various places who are sincere believers? what comes of this? how is it important? why should it be placed as an article of faith, after the belief in the HOLY GHOST? Doubtless the only true and satisfactory meaning is that which our Divines have ever taken, that there is on earth an existing Society, Apostolic

as founded by the Apostles, Catholic because it spreads its branches in every place; i. e. the Church Visible with its Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. And this surely is a most important doctrine; for what can be better news to the bulk of mankind than to be told that CHRIST, when He ascended, did not leave us orphans, but appointed representatives of Himself to the end of time?

"The necessity of believing the Holy Catholic Church," says Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition of the Creed, "appeareth first "in this, that CHRIST hath appointed it as the only way to eternal "life .... CHRIST never appointed two ways to heaven, nor did "He build a Church to save some, and make another institution for "other men's salvation. There is none other name under heaven "given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of "JESUS; and that name is no otherwise given under heaven than "in the Church. This is the congregation of those persons here "on earth which shall hereafter meet in heaven..... There is a "necessity of believing the Catholic Church, because except a man "be of that, he can be of none. Whatsoever Church pretendeth to "a new beginning, pretendeth at the same time to a new Church-"dom, and whatsoever is so new is none." This indeed is the unanimous opinion of our Divines, that, as the Sacraments, so Communion with the Church, is "generally necessary to salva-"tion," in the case of those who can obtain it.

If then we express our belief in the existence of One Church on earth from CHRIST'S coming to the end of all things, if there is a promise it shall continue, and if it is our duty to do our part in our generation towards its continuance, how can we with a safe conscience countenance the interference of the Nation in its concerns? Does not such interference tend to destroy it? Would it not destroy it, if consistently followed up? Now, may we sit still and keep silence, when efforts are making to break up, or at least materially to weaken that Ecclesiastical Body which we know is intended to last while the world endures, and the safety of which is committed to our keeping in our day? How shall we answer for it, if we transmit that Ordinance of GOD less entire than when it came to us?

Now what am I calling on you to do? You cannot help what has been done in Ireland; but you may PROTEST against it. You may as a duty protest against it in public and private; you may

keep a jealous watch on the proceedings of the Nation, lest a second act of the same kind be attempted. You may keep it before you as a desirable object that the Irish Church should at some future day meet in Synod and protest herself against what has been done; and then proceed to establish or rescind the State injunction, as may be thought expedient.

I know it is too much the fashion of the times to think any earnestness for ecclesiastical rights unseasonable and absurd, as if it were the feeling of those who lived among books and not in the world. But it is our *duty* to live among books, especially to live by ONE BOOK, and a very old one; and therein we are enjoined to "keep that good thing which is committed unto us," to "neglect not our gifts." And when men talk, as they sometimes do, as if in opposing them we were standing on technical difficulties instead of welcoming great and extensive benefits which would be the result of their measures, I would ask them, (letting alone the question of their beneficial nature, which *is* a question,) whether this is not being wise above that is written, whether it is not doing evil that good may come. We cannot know the effects which will follow certain alterations; but we can decide that the means by which it is proposed to attain them are unprecedented and disrespectful to the Church. And when men say, "*the day is past* for stickling about ecclesiastical rights," let them see to it, whether they do not use substantially the same arguments to maintain their position, as those who say, "The day is past for being a Christian."

Lastly, is it not plain that by showing a bold front and defending the rights of the Church, we are taking the only course which can make us respected? Yielding will not persuade our enemies to desist from their efforts to destroy us root and branch. We cannot hope by giving something to keep the rest. Of this surely we have had of late years sufficient experience. But by resisting strenuously, and contemplating and providing against the worst, we may actually prevent the very evils we fear. To prepare for persecution may be the way to avert it.

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